

**Amendments to the claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing of claims in the application:

**Listing of claims:**

Claim 1 (currently amended) An orally administrable composition for the photoprotection of the skin comprising a photoprotecting effective amount of at least one probiotic lactic acid bacterium, and at least one carotenoid ~~or derivative~~, wherein the at least one carotenoid is present in the composition in an amount from 10<sup>-12</sup>% to 20% by weight, included in an orally acceptable carrier, the composition further comprising a yeast extract.

Claim 2 (previously presented) A composition according to claim 1, wherein the lactic acid bacterium is selected from the group consisting of Lactobacilli and Bifidobacteria.

Claim 3 (previously presented) A composition according to claim 1, wherein the lactic acid bacterium is selected from the group consisting of *Lactobacillus johnsonii*, *Lactobacillus reuteri*, *Lactobacillus rhamnosus*, *Lactobacillus paracasei*, *Lactobacillus casei*, *Bifidobacterium bifidum*, *Bifidobacterium breve*, *Bifidobacterium longum*, *Bifidobacterium animalis*, *Bifidobacterium lactis*, *Bifidobacterium infantis*, *Bifidobacterium adolescentis*, *Bifidobacterium pseudocatenulatum*, and mixtures thereof.

Claim 4 (currently amended) A composition according to claim 2, wherein the lactobacilli is selected from the group consisting of *Lactobacillus johnsonii* (CNCM I-1225) and *Lactobacillus paracasei* (CNCM I-2116), and wherein the bifidobacteria is selected from the group consisting of *Bifidobacterium adolescentis* (CNCM I-2168) and *Bifidobacterium longum* (CNCM I-2170).

Claim 5 (previously presented)      A composition according to claim 1, wherein the probiotic lactic acid bacterium is included in the carrier in a form selected from the group consisting of live form, semi-active and deactivated form.

Claim 6 (previously presented)      A composition according to claim 1, wherein the carotenoid is selected from the group consisting of a carotenoid with and without provitamin A activity.

Claim 7 (previously presented)      A composition according to claim 1, wherein the carrier is a food.

Claim 8 (previously presented)      A composition according to claim 7, wherein the food is selected from the group consisting of milk, yoghurt, curd, cheese, fermented milks, milk based fermented products, ice-creams, fermented cereal based products, milk based powders, and infant formula.

Claim 9 (previously presented)      A composition according to claim 8, wherein the food is a drinkable solution.

Claim 10 (previously presented)      A composition according to claim 1, which further comprises a bioactive molecule.

Claim 11 (withdrawn) A method for producing an orally administrable composition for the protection of the skin comprising the steps of using a photoprotecting effective amount of at least one probiotic lactic acid bacterium or a culture supernatant thereof and at least one carotenoid, included in an orally acceptable carrier, for preparing the composition.

Claim 12 (withdrawn) The method according to claim 11, wherein the lactic acid bacterium is selected from the group consisting of *Lactobacillus johnsonii*, *Lactobacillus reuteri*, *Lactobacillus rhamnosus*, *Lactobacillus paracasei*, *Lactobacillus casei* or *Bifidobacterium bifidum*, *Bifidobacterium breve*, *Bifidobacterium longum*, *Bifidobacterium animalis*, *Bifidobacterium lactis*, *Bifidobacterium infantis*, *Bifidobacterium adolescentis*, *Bifidobacterium pseudocatenulatum*, and mixtures thereof.

Claim 13 (withdrawn) The method according to claim 11, wherein the lactic acid bacterium is selected from the group consisting of CNCM I-1225, CNCM I-2116, CNCM I-2168, CNCM I-2170 and ATCC 27536.

Claim 14 (withdrawn) The method according to claim 11, wherein the probiotic lactic acid bacterium is present in the carrier in an amount of from about  $10^5$  to  $10^{12}$  cfu/ g of the carrier.

Claim 15 (withdrawn) The method according to claim 11, wherein the carotenoid is present in the carrier in an amount of from 10% to 20% by weight.

Claim 16 (withdrawn) A method for improving the photoprotective function of the skin, which comprises the step of orally administering to an individual a therapeutically-effective amount of a composition comprising the combination of at least one probiotic lactic acid bacteria or a culture supernatant thereof, and at least one carotenoid or derivative, in an orally acceptable carrier.

Claim 17 (withdrawn) A method according to claim 16, wherein the composition is selected from the group consisting of Lactobacilli and Bifidobacteria .

Claim 18 (withdrawn) A method according to claim 16, wherein the lactic acid bacterium is selected from the group consisting of *Lactobacillus johnsonii*, *Lactobacillus reuteri*, *Lactobacillus rhamnosus*, *Lactobacillus paracasei*, *Lactobacillus casei* or *Bifidobacterium bifidum*, *Bifidobacterium breve*, *Bifidobacterium longum*, *Bifidobacterium animalis*, *Bifidobacterium lactis*, *Bifidobacterium infantis*, *Bifidobacterium adolescentis*, *Bifidobacterium pseudocatenulatum*, and mixtures thereof.

Claim 19 (withdrawn) A method according to claim 16, wherein the lactic acid bacterium is selected from the group consisting of CNCM I-1225, CNCM I-2116, CNCM I-2168 and CNCM I-2170.

Claim 20 (withdrawn) A method according to claim 16, wherein the probiotic lactic acid bacterium is included into the carrier in a form selected from the group consisting of live form, semi-active and deactivated form.

Claim 21 (withdrawn) A method according to claim 16, wherein the carotenoid is selected from the group consisting of a carotenoid with and without provitamin A activity.

Claim 22 (withdrawn) A method according to claim 16, wherein the carrier is a food.

Claim 23 (withdrawn) A method according to claim 16, wherein the food is selected from the group consisting of milk, yoghurt, curd, cheese, fermented milks, milk based fermented products, ice-creams, fermented cereal based products, milk based powders, and infant formula.

Claim 24 (withdrawn) A method according to claim 16, wherein the food may be in a drinkable solution.

Claim 25 (previously presented) A composition according to claim 1, wherein the probiotic lactic acid bacterium is included into the carrier in a lyophilized powder.

Claim 26 (previously presented)      A composition according to claim 1, wherein the carotenoid is selected from the group consisting of  $\beta$ -carotene,  $\gamma$ -carotene,  $\alpha$ -carotene, lycopene, zeaxanthine, luteine, and combinations thereof.

Claim 27 (previously presented)      A composition according to claim 1, wherein the carrier is a pharmaceutical carrier.

Claim 28 (previously presented)      A composition according to claim 27, wherein the pharmaceuticals carrier is selected from the group consisting of tablets, liquid suspensions, dried oral supplements, wet oral supplements, and combinations thereof.

Claim 29 (previously presented)      A composition according to claim 1, wherein the carrier is a nutritional supplement for oral administration.

Claim 30 (previously presented)      A composition according to claim 29, wherein the nutritional supplement for oral administration is in a form selected from the group consisting of capsules, soft capsules, tablets, pastes, pastilles, gums, drinkable solutions, emulsions, and combinations thereof.